

**Comments regarding the Huntsville City School System**

Martha Williams- [REDACTED]

02/22/2015 10:33 AM

Please respond to Martha Williams- [REDACTED]

History:

This message has been forwarded.

To the Honorable Judge Madeline Hughes Haikala:

Please accept my appreciation for all the time, effort, and expertise you are sharing with the community of Huntsville, Alabama, in resolving the disparities among the demographics and approaches to education that are occurring in the Huntsville City School System.

As with any large organization, there will be many glitches and disagreements that need to be resolved. Open communication is the most effective tool in finding solutions to problems. Lack of communication and antagonistic communication are the two most prevalent problems that we currently experience in Huntsville.

I began my teaching career in the Huntsville City School System in August of 1988, after having spent my entire life teaching as a volunteer in Scouting, church, and other organizations, plus inviting neighborhood children to my home for tutoring alongside my own three children. Teaching is my favorite hobby, and I was delighted when I became a third-grade teacher at the Academy for Science and Foreign Language. In 2000, I transferred to Lincoln Elementary School, then to Chapman Middle School, and, finally, to Montview Elementary School.

My plans were to continue teaching for many, many more years in Title I schools because, due to my personal life experiences and guidance from educational mentors throughout the years, my approaches to classroom management and instructional strategies worked well for the young people whom I taught.

However, in June 2012, I retired from public education, after experiencing two transient ischemic attacks and a heart attack that was brought on by the belligerence of the principal we had at Montview Elementary School from 2009 to 2012. That principal was transferred to a different school later and then coerced into resigning because of the complaints that were registered against him at that school.

During the three years in which the principal was mismanaging Montview and mistreating the students, faculty, and parents there, I sent multiple emails and postal mails to Dr. Ann Roy Moore and to Dr. Casey Wardynski. Dr. Moore met with me in one conference, along with the principal, two representatives from the Huntsville Education Association, the head of the district curriculum, and my husband Roger Williams. Through the support of my husband and the HEA representatives, we were able to achieve, after three hours, a fairly reasonable agreement that the principal would treat me as a professional and would not verbally attack me in private or in public. However, he continued to attack the students, parents, and other teachers and staff in the school.

When Dr. Moore was replaced by Dr. Wardynski, I sought assistance on behalf of the other victims of the principal's antagonistic behavior, with copies to HEA and the Board of Education. Topper Birney was the only person from Central Office who provided any kind of support and encouragement to us. None of the others, including Dr. Wardynski, responded. Dr. Wardynski visited the school three times before I retired and did not meet with me even once, although he talked with every other employee in the school.

At this time, I am very thankful that I retired from public education in 2012 because I am seeing a continued decline in respect for teachers and students, especially for those who are in schools on the north side of the city. Governors Drive seems to be a dividing line between Dr. Wardynski's approaches to education and attitudes toward the population of schools in the Huntsville City School System.

The utilization of the Pearson Educational Company's programs have been very poorly planned and implemented, and the efficacy of the resources from that company are far below the standards that should be accepted in public education classrooms.

Denying recess, instruction in science, social studies, and handwriting skills in the lower grades, hands-on strategies to comprehending concepts, interdisciplinary approaches, and at least a little free social time during lunch has been extremely detrimental to the student population of the schools in north Huntsville. These students are rapidly developing a loathing for educational settings, which, of course, leads to increased disciplinary problems. The teachers have minimum recourse to applying consequences for defiant and violent behaviors. Often, the teachers are verbally reprimanded in front of the students; and many times letters of reprimand have been placed in teachers' personnel files without just cause.

It grieves me to observe the deterioration of our once excellent school system. There are many ways that the degradation can be rectified. We have thousands of skilled, caring teachers, parents, and other community members as well as dedicated students who would willingly work to improve our system.

At this time, the retribution that has been enforced from the Central Office of Huntsville City Schools has muted the majority of the community's comments. Recently, an article published in The Huntsville Times discussed a poll that was sent out to students, parents, and teachers. It was highly significant that the article stated that "no teacher responded." Teachers are in fear of losing their careers, of being physically and verbally harmed, and of being humiliated in public.

If you would be interested in corresponding further with me about the status of Huntsville City Schools and its role in the North Alabama community, I would gladly email or discuss this by telephone. My husband has recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease; and, therefore, we are rarely able to attend meetings.

However, I am very fortunate to be able to continue providing free activities to families

of North Alabama through the Kids Trek programs at the Huntsville Public Library, Oakwood University, and the part of my home that is now designated as the Kids Trek Learning Center. You are very welcome to visit us here, [REDACTED] Huntsville, Alabama [REDACTED]

Please respond to this email so that I know that my input has been received. I appreciate the time and consideration you provided in reading this lengthy missive. Even more, I am grateful that you are working to improve our school system.

Yours truly,

Martha Williams

[REDACTED]